

Message Text

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ACTION BIB-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SS-15 H-01 PA-01
ICA-11 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 NSC-05 L-03 SP-02
/075 W

-----026167 051512Z /45

R 051237Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1387
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USMISSION GENEVA
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 1825

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: CSCE PROP HU US
SUBJECT: RIGHT OF REPLY TO RFE BROADCASTS

REF: (A) BUDAPEST 580 (B) STATE 16738

1. SUMMARY: GOH DECLINES BIB CHAIRMAN GRONOUSKI'S OFFER OF BROADCAST TIME TO REPLY TO SPECIFIC RFE PROGRAMS WHICH IT CONSIDERS INACCURATE OR OVERSTEPPING STANDARDS OF FAIR COMMENT. GOH OFFICIAL, WHILE REITERATING HUNGARY'S ATTENTION TO PRESS FOR ELIMINATION OF RFE, AT SAME TIME ACKNOWLEDGED INCREASE OBJECTIVITY OF RFE'S HUNGARIAN PROGRAMMING. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF WAS INVITED TO FONMIN MAY 4, TO RECEIVE GOH RES-
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PONSE TO OFFER OF RIGHT OF REPLY TO RFE PROGRAMS MADE IN REF (A). WORKING LEVEL OFFICIAL IN MFA PRESS SECTION, ANDRAS LAKATOS, MADE FOLLOWING POINTS. FIRST, GOH HAS ABSOLUTELY NO INTEREST IN PURSUING OFFER OF RIGHT OF REPLY TO RFE BROADCASTS. LAKATOS SAID THAT MANY YEARS OF UNBALANCED AND EMBITTERED ATTACKS BY RFE ON GOVERNMENT OF HUNGARY AND HUNGARIAN LEADERS HAD SO POISONED

ATMOSPHERE THAT IT WAS UTTERLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOH TO CONSIDER COOPERATION WITH SUCH AN ORGANIZATION. SECONDARILY, LAKATOS QUESTIONED WHETHER ANY MECHANISM SET UP FOR RIGHT OF REPLY COULD WORK IN A TIMELY AND OBJECTIVE FASHION. HE DOUBTED WHETHER COMPLAINTS BY GOH WOULD BRING AN END TO NEGATIVE PROGRAMMING. HE ADDED THAT WHILE HUNGARY FOUND VOA PROGRAMMING UNOBJECTIONABLE, EVEN THOUGH PRESENTING U.S. VIEWPOINT, RFE WAS ANOTHER MATTER AND WHENEVER QUESTION OF THAT RADIO AROSE GOH WOULD DO ITS BEST TO BRING ABOUT ITS ELIMINATION. GOH PARTICULARLY OBJECTED TO FACT RFE WAS FINANCED BY USG.

3. ENSUING CONVERSATION ESTABLISHED THAT GOH OBJECTIONS TO RFE ACTIVITIES AND ITS REFUSAL TO CONSIDER ACCEPTING RIGHT OF REPLY ALMOST ENTIRELY BASED ON HISTORICAL FACTOR AND GOH DISTRUST OF RADIO'S SINCERITY AND DETERMINATION TO FOLLOW ITS OWN GUIDELINES. LAKATOS, FOR EXAMPLE, ACKNOWLEDGED THAT RFE IN RECENT YEARS ESCHEWED POLEMICS AND HAD BECOME REASONABLE OBJECTIVE IN ITS APPROACH BUT HE ASCRIBED THIS TO NECESSITY FOR RFE TO HOLD ITS AUDIENCE WHICH WAS NOW ALSO BEING GIVEN OBJECTIVE REPORTING BY HUNGARIAN MEDIA. HE SAID THIS WAS OFFICIAL GOH VIEW. EMBOFF REPLIED THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE BUT RATHER THAT RFE IS STRIVING FOR OBJECTIVITY IN CONTEXT OF GOALS ESTABLISHED AT HELSINKI TO EXPAND

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DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION THROUGH RADIO BROADCASTING AND TO PROMOTE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AMONG PEOPLES.

4. LAKATOS BACKED OFF SOMEWHAT AND RECOGNIZED THAT THE GRONOUSKI PROPOSAL WAS "SERIOUS AND SINCERELY MOTIVATED." EMBOFF SAID BIB PROPOSAL WOULD PROBABLY REMAIN ON TABLE FOR SOME TIME TO COME. WE ASKED LAKATOS FOR HIS PERSONAL OPINION WHETHER GOH MIGHT CHANGE ITS POSITION IN FUTURE. LAKATOS REPLIED THAT DISTRUST OF RFE GREAT BUT THAT EVENTUALLY PROBLEM OF RADIO MIGHT BE SEEN IN DIFFERENT LIGHT, THE IMPLICATION WAS IN FIVE TO TEN YEARS. AT NO TIME DURING CONVERSATION DID LAKATOS MAKE ANY SPECIFIC OBJECTS TO CURRENT RFE BROADCASTING.

5. COMMENT: GOH DOES NOT SEEM TO BE DISTURBED BY CURRENT RFE BROADCASTING AND ITS DETERMINATION TO SEE RFE ABOLISHED SEEMS LARGELY PRO FORMA. GOH WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO ACCEPT BIB OFFER OF RIGHT TO REPLY UNLESS ITS ALLIES, IN PARTICULAR THE SOVIET UNION, DID. HOWEVER, ITS BITTERNESS TOWARDS RFE, DATING FROM COLD WAR ERA, IS GENUINE AS IS ITS DISTRUST OF CURRENT INTENT OF

RFE BROADCASTING AND ITS FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND, DESPITE
EXPLANATION, THE NATURE OF THE CHANGES WHICH HAVE TAKEN
PLACE SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BIB. EMBASSY BELIEVES
OFFER OF RIGHT OF REPLY HAS HELPED TO DISPEL SOME OF
DISTRUST ABOUT COMMITMENT TO RFE'S STATED GUIDELINES
AND OBJECTIVES AND TO REDUCE NEGATIVE IMAGE OF RFE
WITHIN GOH. OBJECTIVITY AND BALANCE OF RFE PROGRAM-
MING, AS WE HAVE NOTED IN CONTEXT OF EMBASSY'S SEMI-
ANNUAL REPORTS ON RFE BROADCASTING, HAS EARNED RFE LARGE
AUDIENCE EXTENDING TO MANY PERSONNEL OF GOVERNMENT AND
PARTY. IT NOW APPEARS TO HAVE ALSO EARNED SOME BEGRUDG-
ING TOLERANCE AND RECOGNITION OF OBJECTIVITY FROM
REGIME. WE BELIEVE CONTINUED STRESS ON OBJECTIVITY,
BALANCED CRITICISM AND REASONED ESPOUSAL OF WESTERN
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VALUES WILL PAY FURTHER DIVIDENDS IN FUTURE.
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Message Attributes

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